IV. Telephone, Telegraph and Air Communication

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509 In 1950 telephone communication became possible with Jazirah for the first time on a commercial basis. Telegraph communication has long been established and an air service connectin Qamishli with Aleppo and Damascus started in 1946, then interrupted by the Palestinian War, has been resumed twice weekly. Fares from Qamishli to Aleppo and Damascus are LS 25 and 50, respectively.

V. Railway Line Projects

165 Railway lines wholly inside Syria from Jazirah to the interior cities have been suggested by the Gibb report and by the United Nations Economic Survey Mission. They suggested a line from Tal Koshak to Hassakeh and from there to Rakka and Aleppo. Such a line would by-pass Qamishli which is the more important agricultural and commercial center, and would go in a district only newly developed, sparsely populated and not of the fertility of the Qamishli area. It seems that a line starting from Qamishli itself would be shorter and would service a more fertile and populated district. From Hassakeh the line could follow the Khabur as long as possible before veering to Deir Ezzor. This would be longer than the proposed line from Hassakeh to Rakka directly, but it would have the advantage of servicing the Khabur Valley and collecting its crops, whereas, the line Hassakeh-Rakka is completely desert. From Rakka there is only one route to Aleppo.

It is difficult to choose between a policy of road construction and railway lines without detailed study of the economics of both, but, whatever the result of the study, Jazirah needs cheap and easy means of communication.

COMMERCE OF JAZIRAH

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441 It stands to reason that the commerce of Jazirah is mainly in its staple prodcuts and in the goods required for the development of its essential industry which is agriculture.

The main crop being wheat, it forms the largest item both in bulk and in value. But the Jazirah merchant plays a secondary role in the handling of this crop. He is sometimes a partner, but more

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

v MUNICIPAL TRANSPORT

Brief mention should be made of the urban transport services in Damascus and Aleppo. In Damascus the tramways are operated by a company nationalized in 1951, whose principal business is the generation and distribution of electric power. The tram service, plagued by low fares and relatively high operating costs, has been running heavy deficits and steadily losing ground to buses, which are operated on a coordinated basis by a large number of owners who pool their receipts for the purpose of meeting certain common expenses. For this reason the company has advanced proposals to buy out the private buses at a cost of about £S 2 million and gradually to substitute new buses at an additional cost of £S 2 million. The mission, however, strongly advises against the use of basically public funds for this purpose, since the buses now appear to be efficiently operated by private enterprise.

In Aleppo the power company, likewise nationalized in 1951, has a monopoly on the operation of both buses and trams. In contrast to the Damascus company, however, it is operating both these services at a modest profit while maintaining moderate fares.

vi TELECOMMUNICATIONS

It is, of course, important that not only transport but also communications facilities expand with a growing economy. In Syria a program for the improvement of telecommunications has long been under way. During the eight-year period 1946-1953, almost £S 31 million was invested in telecommunications, particularly in the expansion of the telephone network and the installation of automatic telephones. In fact, the amount invested for this purpose might be said to be disproportionate to most other fields of public investment. The results, however, have been conspicuous. The number of telephone subscribers has risen from 9,000 in 1949 to 21,218 in 1953, the number of telephone offices from 100 to 132, and the number of telephone circuits from 161 to 379. The Syrian telephone system is now substantially better than that of most neighboring countries.

The postal, telegraph and telephone administration plans to spend a sum of £S 14.317 million over the next five years on the further improvement of telecommunications. The mission had no one of special compe-

14:International Bank S-5 (1954)1955 MD1 Syria MD1

tence to appraise this program. In view of the many other claims on public funds, however, it suggests that the program be reviewed to reduce the target expenditures to about £S 10 million. In this review the highest priority might be given to the expansion of the telephone network in cities which are experiencing a rapid growth such as Kamichliye, Aleppo and Latakia, and to the improvement of interurban connections. The contemplated construction and equipment of a new transmitter for international communications might be given a lower priority.

VII PROPOSED EXPENDITURES

Table 7 provides a projection of government expenditures on transport and communications over the six-year period 1955-1960. This projection takes into account not only the recommendations of the mission but also expenditures, such as those on railways and on road maintenance, which are determined by force of circumstance or the declared intentions of the Syrian government. The heavy increase in expenditures proposed reflects in major part the need to overcome the lag in transport facilities which handicaps the Syrian economy today.

TABLE 7. Past and Projected Expenditures on Transport and Communications

(Thousand £S)

	Past outlays			Projected outlays, 1955–60	
	Av. 1950–52 (actual)	1953 (estimate)	1954 (estimate)	Annual average	Total
Roads (total)	5,078	5,380	9,278	17,125	102,750
Construction and improvement (total)				11,008	66,050
Latakia-Aleppo				1,228	7,370
Aleppo-Raqqa				580	3,480
Raqqa-Jezireh				7,625	45,750
Hama-Ghab				250	1,500
Aleppo-Damascus				667	4,000
Damascus-Dera'a				217	1,300

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TABLE 7 Past and Projected Expenditures on Transport and Communications

(Continued from page 147)

(Thousand £S)

	Past outlays			Projected outlays, 1955–60	
	Av. 1950–52 (actual)	1953 (estimate)	1954 (estimate)	Annual average	Total
Damascus-Beirut				192	1,150
Tourist roads				[a]	[a]
Maintenance	3,233	3,600	5,800	6,117	36,700
Latakia port	373	500	10,000[a]	6,333	38,000
Railways (total)	641	750	1,209	2,833	17,000
Subventions	641	750	1,209	2,000	12,000
Purchase of DHP lines				833	5,000
Telecommunications	4,114	2,350[b]	4,700[a]	1,667	10,000
Grand total	10,206	8,980	25,187[a]	28,875	173,250

[a] Included in tourist program.
[b] Actual.
[a] Amounts include authorizations unlikely to be spent and are thus not comparable with preceding years.

14:International Bank S-5 (1954)1955 MD1 Syria MD1

bus. Perhaps because of this, the tramway company failed to obtain a broadening of its monopoly concession to include buses.

Without legislative restraint, the private bus business continued to grow in the hands of many individual owner-operators. There are now about 120 private buses, and their operators have combined into an association for the sake of uniform rates, pooled revenues and operating economies. Users apparently prefer the buses to the trams, for despite extremely low tram fares the buses have absorbed most of the business. Today, in contrast to 35,000-45,000 daily tram passengers, the private buses carry 100,000-200,000. The tramway operates at a considerable loss.

Seeking a way out of this dilemma, the nationalized tramway company has proposed that it buy up the buses at a cost of around £S 2 million, investing another £S 2 million in a gradual program of replacement with new buses. This idea has not met with favor among the bus owners, who see no public benefit in shifting from a successful and satisfactory private exploitation to a municipal operation.

The mission feels that such a shift is not justified economically, and that there is no need to use public funds for this purpose. Originally the tramways were installed as consumers of electric power generated by the same company. Under present local conditions the growing demand for electricity for other uses suggests that the simplest course is for the outmoded tramway, with its high overhead costs, to retire from the picture gradually in favor of the more efficient bus system already in operation.

VI TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Syrian telephone and telegraph facilities have expanded rapidly in recent years, under the stimulus of an exceptionally clear and coordinated program of development. Investment in new and improved installations, including automatic dial system, has totalled £S 30,861,223 since 1946, mainly provided through interest-free loans from the government.

An even more impressive fact is that the operations are self-supporting. Telecommunications revenue has exceeded operating expense by an average amount of about £S 700,000 per year since 1949. In 1953 the total revenue was £S 10,944,684 against expenses of £S 9,573,585, leaving a record surplus of £S 1,371,099. Officials believe that with more efficient

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

206 operation of the remote offices and certain other economies this surplus of revenue over expense might be increased by as much as £S 3 million.

Statistically the growth and extent of the system may be seen from Table 9. Direct international telephone connections are now available to Rome, Ankara, Amman, Lebanon and Iraq, while telegraph circuits communicate directly with these as well as New York, London, Egypt, Arabia and Yemen. Radiotelephone is used to a large extent on exterior routes, while most of the internal messages are carried on pole-and-wire land circuits.

TABLE 9 Development of Syrian Telecommunications

	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953
Telephone offices	100	110	116	123	132
Telephone subscribers	9,000	14,000	15,410	20,568	21,218
Telegraph offices	62	61	62	64	65
Kilometers of poles	9,500	12,100	13,200	14,900	15,200
Kilometers of wire circuits	11,650	13,200	15,706	36,200	39,620
No. of circuits	161	173	227	337	379

207 Until recently the system also assumed responsibility for radio broadcasting. This has now become a separate service. With payment of £S 6 million the single transmitter was transferred to the new operating authority, but it is still made available for the use of the telecommunications system during six hours per day.

COMMUNICATIONS

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عدد مراكز البريد والبرق وعدد آلات البرقية، ١٩٤٤ — ١٩٥٣

NUMBER OF POSTS AND TELEGRAPH OFFICES AND NUMBER OF TELEGRAPH SETS, 1944 — 1953

Table No: 14

جدول رقم ١٤

Year	مراكز البريد Post offices			مراكز البرق واللاسلكي Telegraph and Wireless centres				عدد الآلات البرقية	السنة
	المجموع Total	مراكز دائمة Permanent	شعب البريد الساعية Auxiliary branches	المجموع Total	مراكز برق Telegraph centres	مراكز اللاسلكي Wireless centres	شعب برق Telegraph branches	No. of Teleg. sets	
1944	149	43	106	149	43	—	106	116	١٩٤٤
1945	154	57	97	159	57	5	97	144	١٩٤٥
1946	186	57	129	191	57	5	129	180	١٩٤٦
1947	—	—	—	197	62	5	130	180	١٩٤٧
1948	207	62	145*	197	62	5	130	180	١٩٤٨
1949	207	62	145	197	62	5	130	180	١٩٤٩
1950	212	61	151	196	61	5	130	180	١٩٥٠
1951	212	61	151	199	64	5	130	200	١٩٥١
1952	224	64	160	204	64	5	135	215	١٩٥٢
1953	220	64	156	205	65	5	135	217	١٩٥٣

* Corrected figure

(*) ارقام معدلة

عدد البرقيات الداخلية والخارجية، ١٩٤٤ — ١٩٥٣

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NUMBER OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TELEGRAMS, 1944 — 1953

Table No. 15

جدول رقم ١٥

Year	البرقيات الداخلية Internal telegrams		البرقيات الخارجية External telegrams				البرقيات الخارجية المتوسطة		السنة
	الصادرة Outgoing		الصادرة Outgoing		الواردة Incoming		Intermediary telegr.		
	عدد البرقيات No. of telegrams	عدد الكلمات بالالوف No. of words'000	عدد البرقيات No. of telegrams	عدد الكلمات بالالوف No. of words'000	عدد البرقيات No. of telegrams	عدد الكلمات بالالوف No. of words'000	عدد البرقيات No. of telegrams	عدد الكلمات بالالوف No. of words'000	
1944	77,760	2,300	26,620	650	31,440	720	22,810	280	١٩٤٤
1945	105,070	1,726	28,000	710	34,100	730	24,295	310	١٩٤٥
1946	163,390	3,448	35,000	922	37,200	816	25,700	396	١٩٤٦
1947	373,700	5,213	92,300	1,312	61,120	1,098	60,000	510	١٩٤٧
1948	394,522	5,701	131,047	1,922	91,141	1,378	71,460	691	١٩٤٨
1949	401,710	5,982	132,978	1,931	100,976	1,473	92,550	771	١٩٤٩
1950	175,224	3,248	89,134	2,045	91,952	1,846	38,460	684	١٩٥٠
1951	242,000	7,000	147,000	2,100	122,000	1,700	110,000	900	١٩٥١
1952	192,330	3,270	132,000	5,300	150,620	2,970	90,000	3,100	١٩٥٢
1953	138,620	1,115	157,560	5,980	163,850	3,215	105,260	3,650	١٩٥٣

Source : Ministry of Public Works

المصدر : وزارة الاشغال العامة

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
LEBANON MEI
SYRIA MDI

near Aleppo, and at Rayaq and there are many emergency landing fields.

Sea Ports. Since 1950 Beirut has handled over 2 million tonnage of ships a year; an increase of about a quarter of a million over the pre-war figures. The port has a free zone through which goods are shipped to Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. But the Syrian Government hopes to divert some of the transit trade from Beirut and has, with the assistance of a loan of $6 million from Saudi Arabia, formed a company to develop Latakia in order to handle about a million tons of goods a year (in 1952 431,593 tons were handled). Work on the extension of the port was begun by a Yugoslav firm in April 1953. Tripoli, Sidon, and Banias are ports handling the oil from the pipelines[1] and are little used for other purposes.

Wireless and Telephones. An automatic telephone exchange system covers most of Syria and an automatic exchange is planned for Beirut. Telephone links with Europe and America are available through Beirut and normal cable facilities exist. The Syrian state broadcasting authority has two large transmitters and broadcasts in Arabic, French, English, and Hebrew. Near Beirut there is a station which broadcasts in Arabic, French, and English.

The 'Common Interests'

Under the Mandate, Syria and Lebanon formed an economic and customs union, the Higher Council of Common Interests, under the direct control of France, which administered customs and excise and controlled concessionary companies, antiquities, and some other services. On 1 January 1944 the control was transferred to the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. The currencies were linked and interchangeable, and both the Syrian and Lebanese pounds were largely backed by French francs based on a rate of 8·83 to the pound sterling (then worth $4·03). In order to maintain a good profit on the exchange brought in by oil companies the Lebanese and Syrian pounds were not devalued in 1949 to follow sterling. Exchange was controlled by one department for both countries and the note issue is in the hands of the French Banque de Syrie et du Liban.

But these links were incompatible with the differences that developed in the economic policies of the two countries when they became independent. Syria, in normal years, has a large exportable surplus of agricultural products and little transit trade, whereas the debtor trade balance of Lebanon is com-

[1] See Appendix IV, p. 570 below.